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THE VIEWS OF JEHUDA HALEVI CONCERNING THE HEBREW LANGUAGE.

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Jehuda Halevi does not indeed belong, like Salomon Ibn Gabirol, the other great master of new Hebraic Poetry, to the “Elders of the Sacred Language,” (זקני לשון הקדש) the founders and pioneers of Hebrew philology, whom Abraham Ibn Esra enumerates in the introduction to his first grammatical treatise, yet he should receive honorable mention in the history of that science, since, in his religio-philosophical work, *Kuzari* (Alchazari), he has made the Hebrew language, its history, and its peculiarities, the subject of a searching treatment, and has put into the mouth of “Chaber,” who, in conversation with the Chazar king, as the appointed representative of Judaism, presents the ideas of the author, extremely noteworthy utterances concerning the sacred speech of Israel. On the basis of these utterances, which have been supplemented by the communications of a pupil of Jehuda Halevi, Salomon Ibn Parchon, I shall attempt to offer the following as a sketch and elucidation of the views of the famous poet, concerning the Hebrew language.

As a poet he had a more masterful grasp of the language than any of his contemporaries; he deserves, therefore, to be heard with special attention, when as a thinker he withdraws himself into the circle of his own speculations and brings forward what are partly the ruling ideas of his own time and environment and partly new results of his investigation.*

1. THE AGE OF THE HEBREW LANGUAGE.

According to the Bible, the Hebrew language is the oldest of all languages; in it Adam and Eve received the revelation of God,† and it was the first colloquial speech of men. Proof of this is found in the etymologies of the name אָדָם from אֲדָמָה; the naming of the woman אֵשֶׁת from אִישׁ (Gen. 2:23), the biblical derivation of the name חַוָּה (Gen. 3:20) קַיִן (4:1) יֵשֶׁת (4:25) נָח (5:24). In addition is the testimony of the Bible to the uninterrupted race succession, which proceeds backward from Eber (עֵבֶר), after whom the Hebrew language

* In what follows *Kuzari* will be cited according to the ed. of the Arabic original by H. Hirschfeld (Leipzig 1887) together with citation of the page of the 2d Cassel ed. (Leipzig 1889). Most citations are from paragraphs (67–81) of the 2d book. I shall sometimes refer to Hirschfeld's German translation, *Al-Chazari* (Breslau 1885).

† For another and more correct comprehension of this passage, see below.

is named, to Noah, and then to Adam. The language was named after Eber, because after the confusion of tongues (Gen. 10:25; 11:9) he preserved the primitive speech. (p. 124, Cassel 167 sq.)

This view, that the Hebrew was the primitive language which was preserved through Eber after the dispersion, was also the commonly accepted view before J. Halevi among Jewish scholars. Saadi says in his preface to Agron, (ס' אגרון)*; לא נשאר לשון הקדש רק בפי בני עבר לברם; Salomon Ibn Gabirol in his Grammatical History (v. 40)†

היא היתה מאז שפת כל היקום עד נפלגו אנשי עצת נבערת בלל שפתם ד' לבר בלשון בני עבר לברה היתה נשארת

Abraham Ibn Esra stated repeatedly the same opinion and adduces as proofs the etymologies of the names אדם, שֵׁת, נח, ‡ that is the same as mentioned by Jehuda Halevi. The derivation of the name of the first man from אדמה 'earth' was compared with the other scriptural etymologies and appears to have passed for an axiom. Abulwalid Ibn Ganah says expressly in his lexicon‡ that אדם means, first, the first man, who was formed from the earth, from which his name was also derived.¶ Perhaps the words of Menahem Saruk ויתכן להיות מנורת אדמה should be removed from the third division of the root אדם, where they cannot be understood, and placed at the close of the first division. Moreover, Jerome gives as the first of possible renderings of Adam "terrenus."¶¶ The naming of woman אשה, because she was taken from איש, man, is found to be an argument for the same thesis in a Palestinian Amora of the fourth century (R. Simon, סימון). Just as the Thora was revealed in the Hebrew language, so also the world was created with the Hebrew language. For in Greek, "man" and "woman" are designated by entirely different words: ἀνθρωπος and γυνή, and in Aramaic one says not גברתא corresponding to the man, גברא; only in Hebrew אשה is from איש.** It is natural that the Palestinian Amora should have chosen for comparison only the two languages, the Greek and the Aramaic, with which the Jewish Diaspora came in contact.

2. THE INNER EXCELLENCE OF HEBREW.

Languages are distinguished from one another in that in some the names of objects are appropriate, in others this is only true to a limited degree. The divine, originally-created language which God taught Adam, since he put it upon his tongue and in his heart, is undoubtedly the most perfect of languages and its

* Cf. Harkavy, *Mittheilungen aus der Petersburger Bibliothek* I. 14.

† Cf. *Einleitung zu Sal. Ibn Parhons Machbereth*—ed. Stern p. xxiii. Zunz, *Jubelschrift*, p. 194.

‡ Cf. Bacher, *Abraham Ibn Esra als Grammatiker*. p. 34 sq.

§ *Kitābulusūl*, ed. Neubaur, col. 21, line 30.

¶ David Kimchi in his lexicon s. v. אדם: ואדם נקרא על שם האדמה אשר לוקח משם. Kimchi had Gen. 3:19 in mind, while Abulwalid was thinking of 2:7.

¶¶ Cf. *Onomastica Sacra*, ed. de Lagarde (1887), p. 27.

** Bereschith rabba c. 18 and c. 31.

philosophers (chiefly the Mu'tazilites)* as the premise for further adduction of proof: while later this view for the original speech of the Hebrew is silently set aside, and the revelation of the latter is taught.†

3. THE LANGUAGES RELATED TO THE HEBREW.

Abraham, who was witness of the confusion of tongues, with his dependents clung to the Hebrew language, named after his ancestor Eber (I 49 § 22). But this was for Abraham a sacred language. For secular purposes he spoke the Aramaic (Syriac), the language of Ur Kasdim where he was born.

This was carried by Ishmael to the Arabs, so that after the Arabic had developed, the three closely related languages were the Aramaic, Arabic and Hebrew. The relationship showed itself in the words, as well as in grammatical rules and inflexions (II 68, p. 126, Cassel p. 168).

We have here a remarkable attempt to establish a historical hypothesis for the relationship of the three chief Semitic languages which since Jehuda Ibn Koreish has been so richly developed and generally employed. Abraham spoke two languages, which were near akin, Hebrew, holy; Aramaic, secular. The sacred language became the language of the lineal descendant of Abraham, who received the revelation, receiving also in this way the character of sacredness. The Aramaic, through the other son, Ishmael, was brought to Arabia, and from it arose the Arabic. Another hypothesis for the relationship of the Arabic with the Hebrew, is found in Jehuda Halevi's pupil, Salomon Ibn Parchon: One of the brothers of Eber, mentioned in Gen. 11:15, is עֶבֶר (Isa. 25:26) who was the ancestor of the Arabs.‡

4. THE FORMER RICHNESS OF THE LANGUAGE.

One can form conclusions concerning the pre-eminence of the Hebrew language, when one considers what people used it in daily conversation, especially when one remembers that all prophecies, religious exhortations—the hymns and poems of the people were in this tongue, and when one further reflects that men like Moses, Joshua, David and Solomon stood at the head of the people. It seems inconceivable that any expression whatever should have been found wanting even though many Hebrew phrases have disappeared before the present time.

We have simply to cast a glance at the descriptions in the Thora, of the Tabernacle, the Ephod, and breastplate, and similar descriptive passages, for

* Cf. Goldziher in *ZDMG*. XXXI p. 49.

† As an interesting analogy to the view of the Hebrew language represented by Halevi, the view of a modern oriental scholar is presented, communicated by Fleischer (*Kleine Schriften* III. 135) (it is the well known Philologist Potrus Bistani in Beirût) in a conference held in the year 1859. He says Arabic was communicated to Adam by revelation; this at least I believe must be held, that Arabic and its two sisters Syriac and Hebrew are different branches and remnants of that revealed Adamite speech.

‡ v. Stade's *Zeitschrift für ATW.*, xi. 39.

which rare words are necessary to be convinced of the perfect vocabulary which the Hebrew language offers for a description and of the rhetorical excellence of the style. The same is true of the names of nations, of birds and stones.* One must further in order to appreciate the richness of the language study the Psalms of David, the Lament of Job, and his arguments with his friends, the warnings of Isaiah, his promises and threats, as well as the other monuments of the early period which have been preserved. (II. 68 p. 126, Cassel, p. 169.)

With this presentation, the Chaber answered the remarks of the Chazar king, that other languages were apparently more perfect and complete than the Hebrew. (II. 67.)

He refers probably chiefly to the Arabic, as the Hebrew translation of Ibn Tibbon makes special mention of the Arabic in the remarks of the king, instead of language in general. Moreover, it was common with the Hebrew philologists of the middle ages to emphasize the extraordinary verbal richness of the Hebrew language as shown by the vocabulary of the biblical books.†

5. ON HEBREW PHONOLOGY.

To the excellences of the Hebrew language in virtue of which the beauties, peculiar to the biblical Hebraism, could develop themselves, and upon which also the mode of transmission of the Bible text, fixed by the Massoretic accent system, rests, belong the following phenomena in Hebrew phonology (II. 78, 80, p. 128 sq. Cassel, p. 175 sqq.).

1. Two "resting" (unvocalized) consonants may stand together,‡ but three "active" (*bewegte*) consonants (i. e. consonants provided with a vowel) cannot follow each other consecutively,§ unless, however, some urgent cause might necessitate this.||

By this means the speech received the basal principle of the "resting," (*ruhenden*) (i. e. of the enduring pause) and attains the advantage of being fitted for ordinary reading: whereby, also, is facilitated the preservation in mind and the imprinting of the substance of what is read, upon the soul.

* In Ibn Tibbon's translation the words **וּמִנֵּי הַעֲוִפּוֹת וְהָאֲבָנִים** are connected immediately with... **וּמִכִּרְוֹת דָּוִד**. Accordingly Cassel translates and connects with each other in a remarkable way two such heterogeneous things. In the Arabic original a word unobserved by Ibn Tibbon precedes the enumeration of the Biblical Classics (David, Job, Isaiah), namely **וְאֵתְנַבְאֵר**. This is coördinated with the word standing at the beginning of the passage (l. 3) viz. **פִּאֲעֵתְנַבְאֵר** and introduces a second proof for the excellence of the language. Hirschfeld, who translates according to the original, has not understood the expression and translates "...with the names of nations, birds and stones, the designations of the praise songs of David.... and with other things."

† See Cassel's remarks on this passage.

‡ E. g. **וְיִשְׁתָּן**, also **צִוֶּר**, where the mater lectionis is treated as a "resting" letter.

§ I. e., with interruption by a resting letter: as is the case in Arabic qā-tā-lānī. A consonant accompanied with a long vowel, is treated as an "active" letter, upon which a "resting" letter (the expressed or suppressed mater lectionis) follows.

|| In cases like **נְחִלִּי**, **הַלְלִי** compound Šewa is treated as a vowel.

2. The retention of the seven principal vowels (Kings); especially, however, the fine and exact distinction between Qameç and Patah, between Sere and Segol; the employment of this distinction to distinguish word-forms with similar sounds but different meanings, like the perfect **שָׁמַח**,* and future consecutive, **וְשָׁמַח**, **וְאֶבְרַחְמוּ** and **וְאֶבְרַחְמוּ**, and the verb **חָכַם** and adjective **חָכָם**.

3. Through the joining of two "resting" consonants, the language gains in euphony in the connecting parts of speech.† This peculiarity makes it possible for a whole congregation to recite a Hebrew text in unison without following a tune.

The three points require further explanation, especially as I felt obliged to differ at the first point and at the conclusion of the last, from the usual conception of these passages in Kuzari.‡ As regards the first point it is founded on the last of the four rules for Hebrew phonetics given by Chajjug,§ but only so far as the succession of the "active" letter is concerned. Respecting the permitted succession of the "resting" consonants, which has only been cursorily indicated in the beginning of the first point, but which forms the substance of the third, I have to remark that here Jehuda Halevi differs from Chajjug's third rule as also does Abraham Ibn Esra|| and follows Abulwalid, who also adds forms like **וַיֵּשֶׁת** to the cases in which two "resting" consonants can stand together, while according to Chajjug the second consonant is to be read as moving with the next words.¶

Both phonetic peculiarities mentioned in the first and third points, give, according to Jehuda Halevi, the Hebrew language this advantage that texts can be recited in unison by a great number of people. In the third point this is especially mentioned and it is added that the recitation in unison takes place, **רוֹן לֶחֶן** (p. 130, l. 25).

These two words, Ibn Tibbon translates by **מבלי טעות**, mentioning as example one meaning of the Arabic verb **לחן** "erravit in legendo." That this illustration is not in accordance with the passage has been felt by Cassel as well as by Hirschfeld; the former translates therefore "without discord," the latter "without one disturbing the other." Each is quite arbitrary. The simple explanation accepted by me is probably the most correct. Jehuda Halevi means to say that the unison in reciting is effected even without the melody by which it is produced in singing.

* According to the punctuation of the older grammarians.

† P. 130, l. 24 is to be read **כִּכְנָא** instead of **אֵלֵא**.

‡ Derenbourg alone gives the text to the first point with the proper translation in the work mentioned in the next note (p. lxxxiii.).

§ See Derenbourg, *Opuscules et traités d'Abou'walid*, p. lxxx.

|| See *Abraham Ibn Esra als Grammatiker*, p. 65.

¶ See Morris Jastrow's *Dissertation on Chajjug's Grammatical works*. (Giessen, 1885) p. 29, Note 1.

But perhaps he understands by **לחן** not melody in general, but as, in the immediately succeeding new passage, (**ללחן אצא שרוט**) the mode of recitation of biblical texts marked by the Massoretic accents as well as recited in unison by the assistance of a melody. Here Ibn Tibbon translates the word correctly with **טעמים**. One is almost inclined to believe that **מבלי טעות** is a corruption of **מבלי טעמים** which could easily have happened with the abbreviation **מבלי טע**.

In the first point, the sense found by me in the Arabic text has not been recognized by the commentators and translators. The words on which the argument depends are in the original (p. 128, l. 26), **פנא אלכלאם אלסכון ואכסב הרה**, **אלפצילה** **אעני אלאלפה** **ואלנשאט**; **ובא הריבור נוטה אל הנח והועילה זאת המעלה ר** "ל" **החברה והחריצות על הקריאה**.

Cassel translates:—"Where the speech inclines toward the 'resting' (consonant?) this peculiarity, namely, the fixed uniformity of sound, assists the reading considerably." According to Hirschfeld:—"Then the speech comes to a rest and has attained this advantage, namely euphony or fluency in reading." The same misconception is common to the otherwise differing translations. The Arabic **אלפה**, Hebrew **חברה** is translated "similarity of sound." The word in reality is to be understood in the same way as in a preceding sentence (l. 17) **אלא אנא נפסד וצע לגתנא אתי וצעת ללאלפה פנדהא ללשתאת**.

The Chaber says this (II. 74):—"By the application of the Arabic metre to Hebrew we destroy the natural tendency of our language, which is intended to unite more closely those who speak it, whilst through this artificial metre we make it a source of division and confusion." This sense, which again was not recognized (Cassel:—"we spoil the nature of our language, which is founded upon unisonous tone, and produce discord;" Hirschfeld almost literally the same) is evident in the continuation of the conversation. "How is this to be understood," asks the king (II. 75), "that is, in what respect is it the nature of the Hebrew language to encourage unity?" whereupon the Chaber responds (76):—"Have you not seen how a hundred people read the Holy Scriptures as if they were but one man, how they stop at the same moment, and resume at the same instant?" The king answers (77), that he has observed this and never seen the like among the Arabians or Persians. "But," says he, "how did the language acquire this power," (**הרה אלפצילה**) and how does the metre destroy it? Thereupon the Chaber replies, first (78) with the sentence given above that through the phonetic peculiarity of the Hebrew the pause has come into the language* and the language has in consequence gained (read *üksibä*) this advantage, (**הרה אלפצילה**), namely the possibility of unisonous recitation, and the encourage-

* **אלכלאם** is the object of **נא**, **אלסכון** the subject.

ment of concert reading." This is a literal translation of the passage which was more freely described above.

How the before mentioned result is produced from the cause given by Jehuda Halevi, can be set forth as follows. Because the speech, through the partiality for syllables and words ending in "resting" consonants, and the prohibition of a continued series of short open syllables, is obliged to pause at short intervals, it becomes possible, by a unisonous recitation, which pays attention to the frequent points of rest, to acquire perfect harmony in reading, and this peculiarity in effects promotes recitation in unison, and there produces closer unity between man and man (חִבְרָה, אֶלְפָּה).

The second point, which like the other two has mainly in view the contrast with the Arabic, calls attention to the wealth of vowels in the Hebrew language, as also the part which vowels play in the distinction of word-forms.

6. THE HEBREW VOWELS.

The pronunciation of the vowels in Hebrew can be divided in three ways: Closing, (scil. of the mouth), opening, and breaking (violently drawing apart); upon further subdivision we find the following vowels. I. 1. The great closing, or Qameç. I. 2. The medium closing or Hôlem. 3. The little closing or Šureq. II. 4. The great opening or Paṭṭah. The little opening or Segol. III. 6. The great "drawing apart" or Sere. 7. The small drawing apart or Hireq. The Š'wâ can be pronounced in each of these ways according to the rules laid down for it; it designates vowel pronunciation pure and simple, without any addition which would require a "resting" sound after it (II. 80, p. 130 sq. Cassel, p. 182 sqq.).*

The seven Hebrew vowels (the seven kings) which differ one from the other in the Massoretic punctuation, have already been traced back by Abulwalid† to three main vowels. He designates them by their Hebrew names, שֶׁרֶק, חֶרֶק, פֶּתַח. These are the "mothers, roots" (אִמֵּהוֹת, אֲצִילוֹ) of the vowels, the others are the "daughters, branches." Jehuda Halevi acts logically, and indeed more correctly, in not bringing forward three of the seven vowels as principal vowels. He mentions, as "directions" (נְהָאוֹת) of the "movement" in vowel pronunciation, the three different methods of mouth-formations which he designates by the three Arabic words (כֶּסֶר, פֶּתַח, צִמָּה) and under which he classifies all the seven vowels. Herein he agrees with Abulwalid, but differs materially with him in regard to the vowels of the first class, for, according to Abulwalid, Šureq ranks above Hôlem, and this above Qameç; our author names them in the following order Qameç, Hôlem, Šureq. This difference is explained by the fact that Abulwalid proceeds from the closed mouth, and therefore gives the first place to

* Cf. also III. 31 (p. 180; Cassel, p. 238), where Jehuda discusses the oral tradition of vowel pronunciation and that which was afterwards fixed by signs.

† In *Takrîb wataskîl*, v. Derembourg, *Opuscules*, p. 275.

Šureq (u) and also considers this the main vowel of its class; next comes Holem (o) which is produced by a somewhat less forcible closing, and then the Qameç (a) which approaches closely to Paṭṭah. Jehuda Halevi, on the contrary, takes into consideration the size of the opened mouth during the pronunciation of the vowel. Therefore Qameç is assigned the first place, Holem the second, and Šureq the third. Only thus is there any meaning in his designations "Great," "Medium," "Little." There is no question here of quantity, even in a relative sense, as Cassel would have us think.* Abraham Ibn Esra in the beginning of his *Zachôth* adopts the view of Abulwalid, and also the theory of the parallel to the three principal vowels in the three elementary movements of the world (upward, downward, roundabout),† but he makes the leading vowel of the first class not Šureq, but Holem.

In the Hebrew alphabet the letters א ה ו י occupy the first rank, because they designate the vowel pronunciation without which the other letters would be soundless. They are, one might say, the souls which give life to the other letters. The א and ה belong to the A-group of vowels, the ו to the O-group, the י to the I-group,‡ (p. 230, Cassel p. 303). Since ה and א belong first of all to the long Qameç, this vowel was not reckoned in the O-group but in the A-group.§ The symbol of soul and body, for the relations of vowel and consonant has been adopted in *Zôhar*.||

What Jehuda Halevi says in the first place about the pronunciation of the Š'wâ is the substance of the well known traditional rules for pronouncing the Š'wâ *mobile*, which are already found in Aharon b. Asher. The second part of the remark means that after the Š'wâ neither a final consonant nor a *mater lectionis* is permitted.

7. THE THREE STAGES OF WORD-FORMATION.

1. By contemplating every separate word and each of its letters, without regard to the influence produced on its pronunciation by the connection in which it is placed, that is to say, without regard to connection and pause, long and short words etc., one obtains a knowledge of the laws by which the word in the first stage of its formation is pronounced. This first formation (תכונה, וציע) shows the vowels in their original, unchanged use and the Š'wâ without Ga'ja (Methegh).¶

* See Cassel's translation, p. 183. "The great Qameç," "the medium Qameç" etc. is not correct. The קמץ of Ibn Tibbon is not a vowel name, but like the Arabic original צמח, descriptive of the form of mouth used in the pronunciation of the three vowels, which belong here.

† See *Abraham Ibn Esra als Grammatiker* p. 61 sq.

‡ As to how the letters of prolongation (*matres lectionis*) belong to the individual vowels, J. H. explains in the leading paragraph (II. 80) of this discussion.

§ See Cassel, p. 183.

|| See Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre* p. 174; *Abr. Ibn Esra als Grammatiker* p. 31; *Revue des Etudes Juives* XXII. 225.

¶ At one point he designates these more definitely thus: באלטבע באלוצין אלאור p. 132 l. 10. It is thus the "natural" form of the word.

2. In the second stage the pronunciation of the separate word is often changed relative to the euphony in connecting the expressions and in the connection of speech.

3. The third stage is the sentence as it is to be read with accentuation, whereby the pronunciation often becomes different from the first two stages (II. 80 p. 132, ll. 16–23, Cassel, p. 185).

By the above definitions Jehuda Halevi gives distinctly the outlines of his peculiar theory, by which he contemplates the pronunciation of the Hebrew word in the three-fold stages, as word-individual; as member of the syntactically connected sentence; as part of the unity of a verse provided with Massoretic accentuation. From the point of view of these three stages, he tries to explain in a very fine and intellectual manner, a series of remarkable phenomena in the domain of the science of Hebrew word-formation, and to trace them back to a uniform principle. With regard to these phenomena produced by the Massoretic punctuation, he says at the end of his definitions (p. 138, l. 4):* The founder of this subtle science (the Massoretic punctuation) hinted at many secrets still, which are hidden from us, but which we have in part found out, by suggesting to us the true sense of Bible passages through niceties of punctuation. Yet Jehuda Halevi only mentions, as an example of the exegetical significance of the Massoretic punctuation, the already discussed example **הָעוֹלָה** (Eccl. 3:21). In general it is only on grammatical details that Jehuda Halevi throws light, and some of these may be cited here as illustrations of his peculiar theory of the three stages.

1). From the rules of the vowels (132, 3–16), the one concerning Paṭṭaḥ and Segol must be mentioned. Paṭṭaḥ and Segol are not followed in the first stage by a “resting” letter of prolongation, while the second stage prolongs them, either because serving as support for the pronunciation (the accent of the word falling on them) or because they have an accent themselves or stand in pause. In modern terminology the rule would read thus. Paṭṭaḥ and Segol are by nature short vowels, in the second stage they become long.

2). The verbal-form **פָּעַל** presents a pronunciation contrary to that of the vowels of their two syllables, leaving the first syllable with the long vowel Qameṣ unaccented, while the second syllable with the short vowel Paṭṭaḥ is pronounced with a prolongation on account of the accent. In the vowels, we recognize the first stage; in the pronunciation necessitated by the speech, the second stage. That the prolongation of the second syllable of **פָּעַל** is due only to tone, not to a quiescent weak letter, is seen in such cases as **אֶמְרֵי**, (Gen. 20:5), where on account of the short, accented little word on which the verb rests, the latter remains in the first stage and the first syllable is accented, (p. 134, l. 5–8).

* “A glorifying of this wonderful science” v. c. III. 32.

3). The noun-forms of the type פֶּעַל prolong the first syllable although it contains Segol. This remarkable fact we will understand, when we consider that, if the first syllable were not prolonged, the second one would have to be. This would have produced the strange fact that between the Segol of the second syllable and its ending consonant a quiescent weak letter would have been inserted. On the other hand, the natural place for the prolongation (the accent) is on the first syllable, where the Segol stands in an open syllable, as the form פֶּעַל, thereby answers to a combination פֶּן אֵל, not פֶּאֵן עֵל, and even through the change of the Segol into Qameç פֶּעַל required by the pause, there would result a word-form answering to the likewise normal combination פֶּן עֵל (134, 23-28, 136, 1-2).*

4). It is remarkable that nouns like מִקְנֶה, מַעֲשֵׂה מְרֹאֶה, in the *status absolutus*, have the Segol in the second syllable, but Sere in the *status constructus* and in the forms with suffixes,† (where usually the shorter form is found). We understand this when we consider that the ה, the quiescent third radical of these word-forms is to be considered as not existing, so that the above words ought to be written without ה and therefore the preceding letter is pronounced with the lesser vowel, the Segol.‡ But the Segol becomes Sere when the necessity arises of bringing forward the third radical ה, as for instance in מַעֲשֵׂהוּ, מְרֹאֶהוּ || מִרְאִיהוּ ‡ מַעֲשֵׂהוּ (136, 21, 27).

8. THE PRONUNCIATION OF שְׁתִּים

When Jehuda Halevi, so relates his pupil, Salomon Ibn Parchon,|| came to Africa, he heard everybody pronounce the word שְׁתִּים as if it were אֲשֵׁתִים. He, as well as his companion, Abraham Ibn Esra were surprised at this peculiarity, but found after due consideration that this pronunciation of the above mentioned numeral was quite justifiable. Jehuda Halevi explained it in the following way: since שְׁתִּים was derived from the masculine שְׁנַיִם and the נ in the root of this numeral had been replaced by the Dagheš in the ת there had to be heard a vowel** (like אֵ) before the vowelless ש, because otherwise the ת could not have been pronounced with a Dagheš as the letters ב ג ד כ פ ת after the š'wâ (mobile) have to be aspirated. This pronunciation אֲשֵׁתִים answers to the rule

* By the side of the supposed forms פֶּעַל the corresponding anomalous combination would be פֶּן אֵל.

† אֲצַפָּה means both.

‡ About Segol it is said on a similar occasion, p. 130, l. 12, לאֲנֶה אֶקֶל אֶלְחִרְכָּאת תַּמְכָּנָא (be. cause it is the vowel occupying the least space).

§ This must be, as is plain, the correct reading not מַעֲשֵׂה, מְרֹאֶה or מְרֹאֵם as the latter form does not exist.

|| The closing words of this passage defy any attempt at explanation מִקְנֶה עֵנֶר אֶלְאֲצַפָּה לִיקוּם עֵנֶר אֶלְאֲצַפָּה פִּי מְרֹאֵם מַעֲשֵׂה.

¶ Maḥbereth Hearukh, ed. Stern, Introd. 4 c.

** In Ibn Parchon designated by the form גַּעֲיָא.

by which in words like **הַפְּכֶם** (Is. 29:16) **בְּרַכַּת** (Job 29:13) **יִרְבֶּה**, the third letter is pronounced with Dagheš, since it follows a “resting” consonant, with the exception of a few examples fixed by the Massora. Therefore **שְׁתִּים** ought not to be read **שְׁתִּים** because then the word would be joined to the root **שָׁתָה**, to drink, (cf. **שָׁתָה** from **שָׁתָה** Gen. 24:18).^{*} This is the argument of Jehuda Halevi as it may be understood from the rather confused representation of Ibn Parchon. Ibn Esra, who on this occasion is mentioned as acquiescing in the reason for this pronunciation, afterward refuted it.[†]

9. THE MEANING OF THE ACCENTS.

The aim of the language is: To cause the thoughts and feelings bred in the soul of the speaker to penetrate the soul of the listener. This aim can only be reached perfectly by verbal conversation on account of the advantage which it has over written communication. For oral speech has the most varied expedients at its disposal. The stopping at a pause, the lingering on parts of speech which belong together, the modulation of tone, motions of the hands, and expression of the eye in sentences of admiration, interrogation, narration, promise, threat or prayer, as well as movements (gesticulations) for which there is no verbal equivalent.[‡] The speaker often makes great use of the motions of the eyes, the eye-brows, the whole head and the hands in order to express anger or good will, humility or pride in differing degrees. Along with that, which remains of the language of the biblical scriptures, has been preserved an ingeniously devised method, peculiar to them, which makes known the manifold contents of speech and takes the place of the above mentioned auxiliaries of verbal speech. These are the Massoretic accents (**טעמים**) with which the Holy Scriptures are read. By them pause and connection are alike depicted, through them question and answer, command and desire, eagerness and indifference, commencement of speech and conclusion, are separated from each other.[§] One could write whole volumes on this subject. (II. 72, p. 127, cf. Cassel p. 171 sq.) Salomon Ibn Parchon says in connection with the discussions on Arabic prosody to be mentioned in the following paragraph and quite in the spirit of the above explanation: “We have in our language a means by which the reader can distinguish surprise, threat, entreaty, confusion, question, act. For example compare the

^{*} The words of Ibn Parchon **ראיות נכוחים** are in need of a little correction, either **וְחֻקִּים** means ‘he confirmed the African Jews in their pronunciation’ or ‘הוֹרָה’ **ר** is object, and the subject of **וְחֻקִּים** would be **כִּמָּה רָאִיתִי** (not **בְּכִמָּה**) that is: ‘several reasons confirmed R. Jehuda in this.’

[†] See *Abraham Ibn Esra als Grammatiker*, p. 65.

[‡] The words **הַמְלִיצָה הַפְּשׁוּטָה** (Ibn Tibbon **שְׁמַקְצֵר כִּהֶם אֶלֶּבְאָרָה אֶלֶּבְאָרָה**) תקצר ענהא אלעבארה אלכארה (Ibn Tibbon) Cassel translates “By which ordinary speech can be shortened.” Hirschfeld “without which the external visible speech would not be sufficient.” Both are incorrect.

[§] **אֲבִתְרָא** and **כֹּחַר** (הַתְּחִלָּה and הַגֵּדָה) really mean subject and predicate in the nominal sentence.

question in Ex. 17:7; the perplexity indicated by the accent on וַיִּתְמַהֲמַה, Gen. 19:16; the entreaty in Ex. 5:15; rebuke Num. 23:19, and thus thou recognizest the rest of these modes of speech by the accent of the Bible passages, as if the prophet stood before thee and spake to thee face to face.”

10. THE ARABIC METER AND THE HEBREW LANGUAGE.

A language in which the manifold feelings and affections are to be expressed by the means mentioned in the above paragraph, must without doubt refuse the metrical form. For metrical speech can only be recited in one way (fixed by the proper meter) and has to be connected where according to the sentiment, a separation ought to take place; interrupted, where the speech should continue; hence, if the expression be metrical, great care is necessary to avoid such offenses against the sense. (p. 128, Cassel, 173 sq.)*

The use of the meter in the Hebrew not only destroys the manner of expression which adapts itself to the contents and is founded on the nature of the language, but also breaks the fundamental phonetic laws on which rests its fitness for producing unity (see above).

The use of the foreign meter is an act of sinful deviation from the truth and of the opposition to the laws of the holy language. The foreign meter transgresses in the first place the law of the Hebrew language, in accordance with which two “resting” letters can stand together; the difference between the accentuation of the ultima and the penultima would be obliterated; אֲכֻלָּה is pronounced like אֲכֻלָּה; אֲמַרְי occupies the same rank as אֲמַר, אֲמַרְי would be like אֲמַר. In the meter one does not distinguish between שְׁבַתִּי (שְׁבַתִּי) the perfect tense and the future consecutive (וְשָׁבַתִּי). In the Pijut (i. e. the older synagogical poetry with rhyme but without meter), there is sufficient opportunity for the use of a poetical form without the transgression of the laws of the language.

Yet with the adoption of meter the same thing has happened to us, as happened to our fathers when the words of censure in Ps. 106:35 were uttered. “They were mingled among the heathens and learned their works.” (II. 74, 78, pp. 128, 130, Cassel, p. 175, 179). This condemnation of the new Hebrew prosody derived from the Arabic, sounds forth as a confession of sin. Indeed we learn from Salomon Ibn Parchon,‡ that Jehuda Halevi vowed never to write any more metrical poems; he said that the metrical poet only follows the meter and makes equivalent, words like שְׁבַתִּי and שְׁבַתִּי, אֲמַר and אֲמַרְי. What Ibn Parchon

* The king remarks on this subject “In reality the preference granted to euphony ought to be displaced by that founded on the contents of the speech. For prosody delights the ear, but the Massoretic system pleases the mind.

‡ מלעיל, מלרע.

‡ l. c. p. 5b.

says just above on this subject, seems likewise to be derived from the remarks of Jehuda Halevi. Some of it is also to be found in the passage of Kuzari just reproduced. He says: for this reason (on account of the law mentioned in the first part by Jehuda Halevi, that in Hebrew, three "active" consonants can follow each other only exceptionally); the Israelites, before they mingled with the Arabs and learned their works,* had no artistic poetry† with rhyme and meter; for the holy language is not like the other languages. If rhyme and meter had been appropriate to Hebrew, it would have been used by the old writers of the Psalms. What we are able to do with our little capacity and knowledge of the language, David and Solomon would certainly have done, yet in the Bible we find no rhymed or metrical verse. If the Hebrew language had been adapted to the forms of poetry, the old poets of Israel would certainly have used them earlier than any other nation of the world.‡

Already more than a century and a half before Jehuda Halevi's criticism of the new Hebrew meter, it had been made the object of a similar attack based on practical reasons. The pupils of Menaḥem b. Sarūk in a written controversy with Dûnasch b. Labrât, devoted their first chapter to a very elaborate proof of this thesis, that it is not allowable to use the Arabic meter in the Hebrew language.§ Dûnasch, if not the first who introduced Arabic prosody into Hebrew poetry was without doubt the one who introduced it into Spain. How little success the protest of the pupils of Menahem had against this innovation they themselves furnish evidence in their written controversy. They use in the poetical parts of their work the meter they repudiate and, indeed, as they themselves say, to show their opponent that they understood the easy art of verse meter as well as he. It is a tragical fact that he who had raised this art to the pinnacle of perfection, pronounced at the end of his brilliant career the same condemnation against it, with which the introduction of the metrical art into Hebrew poetry had been accompanied.

January, 1892.

* קודם שיתערבו בערביים וילמדו ממעשיהם is an application of the Psalm verses quoted by Jehuda Halevi as well as a play upon the verb "to mingle" and the name of the Arabians.

† Ibn Parchon here makes use of the expression פִּיּוּט in a larger sense than Jehuda Halevi in the above passage פִּיּוּט.

‡ That Jehuda Halevi did not completely abstain from the use of the artistic medium in his later poems, Kaufmann tries to prove. See his paper (Breslau, 1877) p. 46.

§ S. G. Stern *Liber Responsionum* (Vienna, 1870) p. 19-29.